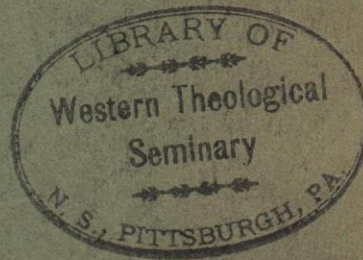


SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

The Apostle of the East and West

BY JAMES A. KELSO



Centennial of Western Foreign Missionary Society

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The Apostle of the East and West

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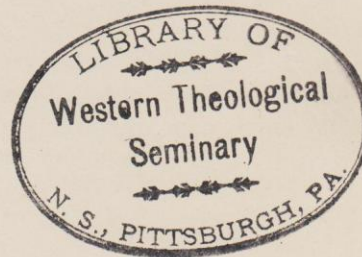
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“The wonderful peace which the man of prayer feels while praying is not the result of his own imagination or thought, but is the outcome of the presence of God in the soul. The vapour rising from a pond cannot become large clouds and come down as rain. It is only from the mighty ocean that such large clouds, filled with the rain that quenches the thirsty earth and makes it fertile, can take their rise. It is not from our subconscious minds but from the illimitable ocean of God’s love, with which we are in contact in prayer, that the peace comes.”—Sadhu Sundar Singh.

FOREWORD

The fifth day of November, 1834, saw a lonely American arrive in Lodiana, a frontier post of the British Army in the territory of the Punjab. It was the Rev. J. C. Lowrie, recently graduated from the Western Theological Seminary and commissioned by the Western Foreign Missionary Society to carry the Gospel to India. That a single man is sent to lay the first foundation stone of the Church of Christ in a populous province of India indicates the sublime faith both of the members of the Society and of the messenger.

Seventy years later a youth of less than sixteen years, the scion of an influential Sikh family of the native State of Patiala, not far distant from Lodiana, after a remarkable vision confesses Christ to his father. Driven from his home, this boy takes refuge with Rev. E. M. Wherry, D.D., the head of the Boys Boarding School at Lodiana, where he continues his study of Christian truth already begun in the Mission School of his native town, Rampur. The life story of this boy and what he attained to in his manhood are briefly rehearsed in this booklet. In the person of Sundar Singh, the Christian Sadhu, the Indian Church has more than paid her debt not only to the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., but to every Christian body which has had a share in the evangelization of India, for this Christian who came out of the bosom of the Sikh Khalsa belongs to the Church Universal.

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

*"The Apostle of the East and West"**

JAMES A. KELSO

It is a common practice in American life to estimate the success of a movement almost entirely in statistical terms. When applied to missionary history, this method of appraising achievements, with its emphasis on arithmetic, naturally leads to a distorted and superficial view of results. The number of converts gained by the preaching of the Gospel and the social service of the Church is a standard of achievement readily applied and easily understood, and consequently serves a good purpose. But there is another standard, that of quality and personality, which is a more searching test, not only of success but also of the power of the Gospel to change men's lives and to transform their ideals. The celebration of the centennial of the Western Foreign Missionary Society affords an opportune occasion for the application of the latter test in the study of the character and mission of an Indian Christian, Sadhu Sundar Singh, who, in the uniqueness of his personality and genius and in the range of his influence, ranks with his two fellow countrymen, Ghandi and Tagore. For the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., the character and career of Sundar Singh are of special interest, for he was taught the Scriptures and led to a living faith in Jesus Christ in a school of the Punjab Mission, which the reader will remember was founded by Rev. J. C. Lowrie, one of two missionaries commissioned to India by the Western Foreign Missionary Society in 1833. Not only so, but the spiritual fathers of the Sadhu were Rev. E. M. Wherry, D. D., and Rev. E. E. Fife, missionaries of our Punjab Mission. Furthermore, it may be truly said that the hero of our sketch is one of the brightest jewels in

*The title is borrowed from Professor Heiler's biography of Sundar Singh.

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the crowns of these consecrated servants of Christ and of their loyal native fellow workers.*

Sundar Singh, honored, by a distinguished German theologian, with the title "An Apostle of East and West", is a man above middle height, with black hair and beard, and a light olive complexion, with a carriage of peaceful dignity. One day in the year 1920, clad in a saffron-colored robe and a turban, wearing sandals, he stood before the entrance of a house in London, ringing the doorbell. The maid who responded, a girl from a country village, heard him give his name Sadhu Sundar Singh, and precipitately rushed upstairs, announcing to her mistress: "There's someone wants to see you, ma'am. I can't make anything of his name, but he looks as if it might be Jesus Christ." This spontaneous outburst of an unsophisticated girl was as true a characterization of the spirit of the man as of his external appearance. And this man with oriental garb and mien has arrested the attention of the serious student of Christian Missions by his Indian methods of preaching and his characteristically Indian manner of interpreting Christian truth. The story of his life fascinates the occidental Christian because it reads like a chapter out of the Acts of the Apostles, and it is significant that his character and career have been made a special study by Christian scholars of the first rank, like Canon Streeter of Oxford, Bishop Söderbloom of Upsala, and Professor Heiler of Marburg.

The hero of our sketch was born in 1889, in Rampur, a town of the native state of Patiala in the Punjab, up in the northwestern section of the Asiatic peninsula, where our missionaries laid the foundations of the church one hundred years ago. Like most of the people of this particular region, his family were Sikhs, a re-

*Unfortunately the reader of Canon Streeter's works would never learn that Sundar Singh owed anything to Presbyterian Missions. The reason for his baptism by an Anglican missionary will be given later on. Professor Heiler does full justice to the part our missionaries had in the conversion and instruction of the Indian saint.

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formed Hindu sect, which had given up polytheism and idolatry under the influence of Islam some four hundred years ago. His father was a man of means, so his boyhood was passed in surroundings of luxury and ease. According to the light of her faith, his mother was a religious woman who took a great deal of interest in his spiritual training. She often told her son that his brothers were to pursue riches and worldly fame, but that her ideal for him was that of a Hindu Holy Man, or Saint, the meaning of the title "Sadhu". The goal of a Sadhu or Hindu Saint is to secure peace in this life, and such was the ideal which this mother implanted in the mind of her gifted child, although she little realized in what way her plans would reach fruition. All through his writings and sermons there are touching references to this woman. In a conversation with the Archbishop of Canterbury he said: "If I do not see my mother in heaven, I shall ask God to send me to hell so that I may be with her". Is it possible to doubt that "the Light which lighteth every man coming into the world" had dispelled some of the darkness from the mind of this Indian woman? At any rate, it is unquestionable that she planted in the heart of her son the desire for peace and that he zealously sought this goal with the means which she and his religious teachers offered him. Under their instruction he had learned by heart most of the Bhavagad Gita, the purest and sublimest of the Hindu Scriptures, by the time he was seven years of age. Not satisfied with this achievement, he also read the sacred book of the Sikhs, known as the Granth, as well as the Quran, and a number of the sacred philosophical writings of the Hindus. That he did this all before he was sixteen years of age in his quest for peace indicates the keenness of his mental powers. He also sought peace by the Hindu method of Yoga, a mode of inducing self-hypnotism by rhythmical breathing and gymnastic movements. The consequent hypnotic state is commonly regarded as a temporary absorption of the individual

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human soul into the Supreme Cosmic Spirit, the *summum bonum* of the orthodox Hindu. To the knowledge of the sacred writings of his native land, this Indian lad added a familiar acquaintance with the Christian Scriptures as a pupil in the local school of our Presbyterian Mission. His attitude to the teachings of the Bible was bitterly hostile in these youthful days. He hated and despised the Christian book because its principles and ideals were subversive of the faith of his fathers.

Conversion

The description of the intellectual and religious environment of Sundar Singh has prepared us for the turning point in his life, when the risen and glorified Jesus appeared to him so that he saw the Savior with his physical eyes, as he always claims, and heard the Lord speak to him. To do it justice, the account of this experience must be given in his own words, for it is worthy at least to be put beside the description of the conversion of St. Augustine or St. Francis or Martin Luther, if not that of the Great Apostle himself. Let us hear his confession:

"Preachers and Christians in general had often come to me and I used to resist them and persecute them. When I was out in any town I got people to throw stones at Christian preachers. I would tear up the Bible and burn it when I had a chance. In the presence of my father I cut up the Bible and other Christian books and put kerosene oil upon them and burnt them. I thought this was a false religion and tried all I could to destroy it. I was faithful to my own religion, but I could not get any satisfaction or peace, though I performed all the ceremonies and rites of that religion. So I thought of leaving it all and committing suicide. Three days after I had burnt the Bible, I woke up about three o'clock in the morning, had my usual bath, and prayed, 'O God, if there is a God, wilt thou show me the right way or I will kill myself'. My intention was that, if I got no satisfaction, I would place my head upon the railway line when the five o'clock train passed by and kill myself. If I got no satisfaction in this life, I thought I would get it in the next. I was praying and praying but got no answer; and I prayed for half an hour longer hoping to get peace. At 4:30 A.M. I saw something of which I had no idea at all previously. In the room where I was praying I saw a great light. I thought the place was on fire. I looked round,

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but could find nothing. Then the thought came to me that this might be an answer that God had sent me. Then as I prayed and looked into the light, I saw the form of the Lord Jesus Christ. It had such an appearance of glory and love. If it had been some Hindu incarnation I would have prostrated myself before it. But it was the Lord Jesus Christ whom I had been insulting a few days before. I felt that a vision like this could not come out of my own imagination. I heard a voice saying in Hindustani, 'How long will you persecute Me? I have come to save you; you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it?' The thought then came to me, 'Jesus Christ is not dead but living and it must be He Himself'. So I fell at His feet and got this wonderful Peace which I could not get anywhere else. This is the joy I was wishing to get. This was heaven itself. When I got up, the vision had all disappeared; but although the vision disappeared the peace and joy have remained with me ever since. I went off and told my father I had become a Christian. He told me, 'Go and lie down and sleep; why, only the day before yesterday you burnt the Bible; and you say you are a Christian now'. I said, 'Well, I have discovered now that Jesus is alive and have determined to be His follower. Today I am His disciple and I am going to serve Him'."

The reality of this vision was questioned by his father and relatives, who considered it an instance of self-hypnotism similar in nature to the trance states of the Hindu Yogis. After he had achieved fame the Jesuits became hostile critics, and, according to their usual custom, ascribed this vision and subsequent ecstasies to the devil, or insinuated that they were baseless fictions. Sundar Singh himself swept away the hypothesis of self-hypnotism by calling attention to the cold ceremonial bath which he had taken that winter morning before commencing his prayer, and that the appearance of Christ was what he least expected, and to his later detractors he replied by calling attention to the permanent and revolutionary influence of the experience on his life, above all, that through the vision of Christ he had found the peace which he had been seeking. Canon Streeter states his conviction very emphatically, "that the Sadhu did in this commission receive a real and definite divine call", and that "there is no doubt that this vision was the turning point of his life". Professor Heiler, his German biographer, agrees with the English scholar in this opinion.

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Persecutions

The youthful convert did not have to wait long to have the genuineness of his conversion tested, for persecutions within the family circle commenced immediately. His father, with his brother and other relatives, made a determined effort to dissuade him from openly becoming a Christian. They argued that the family would be disgraced and that he would be socially ostracized as well as disinherited. But as he remained immovable and all their efforts failed, he was driven out from his home. It must be remembered that his mother, who had dedicated him to God after her own light, escaped having any part in this, for she had died two years before his conversion. Slow poison was mixed with his food at the last meal at home, not an uncommon method in India of dealing with recalcitrants in religious matters, for it is thought better that a man should die than that he should disgrace his family. The Sadhu's own description of the first night as an exile from home for Christ's sake ought to thrill the heart of an American Christian.

"I remember the night when I was driven out of my home—the first night. When I came to know my Saviour I told my father and my brother and my other relations. At first they did not take much notice; but afterwards they thought that it was a great dishonor that I should become a Christian, and so I was driven out of my home. The first night I had to spend, in cold weather, under a tree. I had had no such experience. I was not used to living in such a place without a shelter. I began to think: 'Yesterday and before that I used to live in the midst of luxury at my home; but now I am shivering here, and hungry and thirsty and without shelter, with no warm clothes and with no food'. I had to spend the whole night under the tree. But I remember the wonderful joy and peace in my heart, the presence of my Savior. I held my New Testament in my hand. I remember that night as my first night in heaven. I remember the wonderful joy that made me compare that time with the time when I was living in a luxurious home. In the midst of luxuries and comfort, I could not find peace in my heart. The presence of the Savior changed the suffering into peace. Ever since then I have felt the presence of the Savior".

In the loneliness that ensued on the following day Sundar Singh prayed for God's guidance. As an answer

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to his prayer he received the direction to take refuge with the Christians of a neighboring village, named Rupar. On his arrival there, he betook himself to the residence of the native Presbyterian minister, Rev. Uppal, a worker of our own Mission. In this haven of refuge he collapsed in consequence of the poison which had been insidiously working in his system. Mr. Uppal summoned a doctor, who administered emetics but said that he had little hope for his recovery. To the great astonishment of the medical man, the sufferer showed marked signs of improvement on the morrow. The native pastor, Mr. Uppal, as well as our two missionaries, Dr. E. M. Wherry and Mr. Fife, later wrote of his recovery as a wonderful instance of answer to prayer. On his convalescence, these two missionaries took him to the Christian Boys' Boarding School located at the City of Lodhiana, not far removed from his native town, where they cared for him and instructed him with such tenderness and solicitude that he later spoke of them as his spiritual fathers and said that they had done more for him than his parents.

Baptism and Early Ministry

Locally Sundar Singh was a marked youth and his life was in danger from the mob, so the missionaries sent him off to one of the Hill stations of the Mission where their convert could recuperate and spend some time in quiet study before his baptism. There was another reason for postponing this rite for a time, as Indian law does not permit the administering of baptism to those who are under sixteen years of age, without the consent of their parents. As his sixteenth birthday approached, our Presbyterian missionaries at Lodhiana came to the conclusion that it would be unwise to baptize him there, as it might lead to rioting on account of the social prominence of the young man's family. After due consideration, they finally decided to send him to

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Simla, the summer capital in the Himalayas, to Rev. Joseph Redman, of the Church Missionary Society, who found on examination that the young man had an astonishing knowledge of the life and teachings of Christ, and a wonderful personal experience of Christ as Savior, so Rev. Mr. Redman baptized him on the third of September, 1905, his sixteenth birthday. In the baptismal rite of the Anglican Church, the twenty-third Psalm is used as a prayer. Professor Heiler notes that the very familiar words of the opening verse, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want", were not only a prayer but on this occasion a prophecy of the life of the wandering Christian Sadhu.

With his baptism he enters upon the second stage of his life, when he literally became an Apostle to India and the adjoining lands of Thibet, Ceylon, Burma, and the more distant Malay Peninsula. After his conversion he tells us he heard the direct command from the Master, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations."

• *The Sadhu*

After his baptism the manner of bearing witness for Christ became a problem in the mind of this youth of sixteen. Then it was that he remembered the wish of his mother that he should become a Sadhu, or saint, a familiar figure in India. The Hindu Sadhu, from Vedic times, has worn a saffron-colored robe and has wandered from place to place, preaching the doctrines of his faith. Everywhere he has been received with favor because his presence has been looked upon as a blessing, and his person usually regarded as an *avatar*, or incarnation of divinity. He needs to carry no money because the people gladly give him food and afford him shelter if he desires it. Some of the greatest religious teachers of India have been Sadhus, the most famous of them all having been Gautama, the Buddha. Before the yellow

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robe the walls of caste fall down and even the doors of the women's apartments swing open. It is no wonder then that Sundar Singh, casting about in his mind for an effective way of bearing witness for his Lord, determined to be a Christian Sadhu, an evangelist in the garb and after the manner of a Hindu ascetic. He consulted his friend and spiritual father, Dr. Wherry, who advised him to enter the theological seminary at Saharanpur to receive instruction for his work as an evangelist, but Sundar Singh declared he preferred the methods of his own land and wished to proclaim the Gospel as a wandering Sadhu. Dr. Wherry, a Christian scholar, sympathetic and broadminded, recognized the significance of the step and gave him his blessing.

It was exactly *thirty-three* days after his baptism that the young Christian donned the saffron robe and took the vow of a life-long Sadhu. Thus this youth of sixteen years began his wanderings as a missionary—bare-footed, without any possessions except his thin cotton robe, his turban about his head, and his New Testament in his mother tongue. He made it a practice never to beg. By Hindus he was usually treated with kindness and given food after they had heard him preach, but there were times when he had to live on roots and leaves. In some villages which he visited he was joyfully received into the homes; in other places he had to stay in the filthy public caravanserai, on other occasions he took refuge in caves or under trees. He received very different treatment from the Moslems, who drove him away from their villages as soon as they discovered he was a Christian Sadhu. Even some Christian missionaries looked upon his methods with distrust, for they were not able to see how the Indian Sadhu life could be baptized into Christianity. Following the custom of his people, he visited the great pilgrim shrines of India, where Hindus are accustomed to gather by the tens of thousands at certain seasons of the year, and to them he preached the Gospel. In this manner during

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these early years he traveled over Northern India, visited Kashmir, Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and penetrated Thibet. Thibet, the land sealed to the world by the eternal snows of the Himalayas and by the policy of her rulers, had a special attraction for the Sadhu. There are no Christian missionaries in Thibet proper, only on the western edges, high up in the Himalayas, the heroic Moravians have a few stations. It is no wonder, then, that this Indian Christian felt that it was the peculiar mission of Indian Christians to take the Gospel to Thibet, and that it was his duty to be a pioneer—the Apostle to Thibet, just as his forerunner, St. Paul, was the Apostle to the Gentiles. Accordingly, he planned his year so as to spend the winter months in India and the summer in Thibet, for the severe winter of Thibet would make the life of an itinerant missionary an impossibility.

Even in Thibet Sundar Singh occasionally met with a friendly reception from the people, for his saffron colored robe resembled the garment worn by some orders of the Lamas. The mere external resemblance won him a welcome in some quarters and gave him an opportunity to preach the Christian evangel. He has left us the record of an unusual experience which he had in the library of a Buddhist temple in which to his astonishment he discovered a copy of the New Testament. On inquiring of the Lama where he had secured it, he received the answer: "This is a wondrous book and contains wonderful things. Do you know who this Jesus Christ of the Bible is? He must have been an incarnation of Buddha". To this the Sadhu replied: "I believe on Him. He is my Savior and the Savior of the world". The Lama answered: "I do not know whether He is the Savior of the world but I do know that he is an incarnation of Buddha. Thibet is the roof of the world and He will return and Thibet will be His throne; from there He will rule the whole world for it is the roof of the world.

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We wait upon Him, Jesus Christ, that He may rule over the world”.

More frequently he suffered excruciating tortures at the hands of the Lamas on these missionary journeys, and his deliverance, on more than one occasion, was nothing less than miraculous, like the deliverances of the Apostles, as recorded in the New Testament. Space will permit the description of only one of the most famous of these experiences. We give it at this point, although it belongs to a later period of his life. Canon Streeter asserts that the Sadhu was induced with some difficulty to give an account of this remarkable deliverance to a small group at Oxford. We give the story here as narrated by Mrs. Parker, an Indian Missionary, one of his earliest biographers.

“At a town called Rasar he was arrested and arraigned by the head Lama on the charge of entering the country and preaching the Gospel of Christ. He was found guilty, and amidst a crowd of evilly disposed persons he was led away to the place of execution. The two favorite forms of capital punishment are, being sewn up in a wet yak skin and put out in the sun until death ends the torment, or being cast into the depths of a dry well, the top being firmly fastened over the head of the culprit. The latter form of torture was chosen for the Sadhu.

“Arrived at the place he was stripped of his clothes and cast into the dark depths of this ghastly charnel-house with such violence that his right arm was injured. Many others had gone down this same well before him never to return, and he alighted on a mass of human bones and rotting flesh. Any death seemed preferable to this. Wherever he laid his hands they met putrid flesh, while the odor almost poisoned him. In the words of His Savior he cried, ‘Why hast Thou forsaken me?’

“Day passed into night, making no change in the darkness of this awful place and bringing no relief by sleep. Without food or even water the hours grew into days, and Sundar Singh felt that he could not last much longer. On the third night, just when he had been crying to God in prayer, he heard a grating sound overhead. Someone was opening the locked door of his dismal prison. He heard the key turned and the rattle of the iron covering as it was drawn away. Then a voice reached him from the top of the well, telling him to take hold of the rope that was let down for his rescue. As the rope reached him he grasped it with all his remaining strength, and was strongly but gently pulled up from the evil place into the fresh air above.

“Arrived at the top of the well the lid was drawn over again and locked. When he looked around, his deliverer was nowhere to be seen, but the pain in his arm was gone and the clean air filled him with new life. All that the Sadhu felt able to do was

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to praise God for his wonderful deliverance, and when morning came he struggled back to the town, where he rested in the serai until he was able to start preaching again. His return to the city and his old work was cause for a great commotion. The news was quickly taken to the Lama that the man they all thought dead was well and preaching again.

"The Sadhu was again arrested and brought to the judgment seat of the Lama, and being questioned as to what had happened he told the story of his marvelous escape. The Lama was greatly angered, declaring that some one must have secured the key and gone to his rescue; but when search was made for the key and it was found in his own girdle, he was speechless with amazement and fear. He then ordered Sundar to leave the city and get away as far as possible, lest his powerful god should bring some untold disaster upon himself and his people."

The Achievement of Maturity

The year 1912, the 23rd year of his age, marks a new epoch in his life, which Canon Streeter has termed "the achievement of maturity". At the opening of this period he attempted to spend forty days fasting, in imitation of his Lord. To carry out his purpose, he went out to the jungle country at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains, near Dehra Dun, one of our mission stations, a jungle country infested with tigers and other wild beasts. He gathered forty stones and placed them by his side in order to mark the passing of time. He planned to take one of the stones each day and throw it aside, but he became too weak to move the stones and so lost count of time and later on he was uncertain as to how many days of fasting he had completed. Two woodcutters found him in a state of unconsciousness in the forest and carried him in his blanket to Dehra Dun. Later he maintained that he was fully conscious of what was happening, although he did not have strength to speak. It is only fair to give his own estimate of the fast. He claims he saw Christ, not with his physical eyes as he did at his conversion, but in a spiritual vision, with pierced hands and bleeding feet and radiant face. A sense of peace and happiness which he had had ever since his conversion was enriched and increased. He also claims that this fast clarified his faith and perma-

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nently delivered him from certain temptations which had threatened to lure him from his mission. Further, the experience gave him the assurance that his peace and joy did not have their source in some natural power of his own life but came from the influence of God's spirit. He also emphatically maintains that during the extreme physical weakness induced by the fast his peace of mind was increased. This fact was sufficient to convince him that it was not produced by his own natural powers but was a gift from above. He also gained the assurance that the brain and the spirit are not identical, for as his physical strength declined his spirit became more alert. "The brain is like an organ", he said, "and the spirit the organist that plays on it".

He confesses that prior to this experience he was struggling with specific temptations. One of these trials was his annoyance at people coming to him for interviews. We would scarcely consider this a serious temptation, but he felt that it was not Christlike, for Jesus was never annoyed by people seeking Him. The second temptation which he deplores we can understand. It was the pull of his father's house with its comforts and luxuries. Could he not serve God and his fellowmen there without suffering physical hardship and persecutions? After the fast this temptation ceased, for the gift of ecstasy came, and in it he maintains that he finds joys that transcend all material blessings.

Missionary Journey to Southern India and the Far East

Sundar Singh reached the zenith of his career in 1918, when he made a missionary journey through Southern India and visited Ceylon. Wherever he went immense throngs listened to his presentation of the Gospel. In one place it is estimated that twenty thousand people came together to see and hear the Christian Sadhu. From Southern India, where this occurred, he crossed to the Island of Ceylon where he also received a very

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warm welcome. In this stronghold of Buddhism his sincerity and integrity were called in question by the Jesuit Missionaries. The Roman Catholics who were attracted by his preaching were threatened with excommunication, if they attended gatherings which he addressed.

It was at this period of his career, when he had become a popular hero and a national figure, that he had a remarkable temptation. On one occasion when he had gone out into the jungle to be alone for prayer and meditation, he was astonished to see a stranger approaching him, a man of dignified mien, but with a suggestion of cunning in his eyes and with an icy tone in his speech. This stranger, engaging in conversation, made the suggestion to him that he was missing a great opportunity to become a national leader. If he would but make concessions to the Hindus and Moslems by adopting some of the highest elements of their teachings and combining them with Christianity, he would win millions of converts and become the founder of a new national religion. In his description of this experience the Sadhu tells us that instinctively there came to his mind the words, "Get thee behind me, Satan". It is easy for us to recognize the similarity between this temptation and that of the Savior to be a political Messiah, at the outset of His ministry, when the tempter showed Him the kingdoms of this world and all their glory. The form that it took in the mind of the Sadhu is quite natural in his Indian environment, for the religious history of India is replete with instances of religious reformers attempting to blend the best of rival faiths into a new religion.

From Southern India he journeyed to Burma and the Malay Peninsula, where he received the same hearty welcome wherever he preached. At Penang he had the unique experience of being invited to preach the Gospel to a detachment of Sikh soldiers in the local Sikh temple. At Singapore he used the English language for the first time in his addresses, having previously made

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use of an interpreter. From there he continued his journey to the Far East, visiting both China and Japan. In both these lands he addressed audiences not only of natives but also of Americans and Europeans, making a profound impression upon all who heard him. In Japan he was struck with the materialism and the mammon worship of the masses, and he made note of the absence, in both China and Japan, of caste, the outstanding social feature of Indian society, and emphatically asserted as his conviction that it was easier for a Japanese or a Chinaman to pass over into Christianity than it was for an Indian, because of the absence of the caste system in their social systems.

On his return to his native land from his preaching tour in the Far East his father invited him back to his home and told him that he wished to become a Christian, asking his son for spiritual guidance. He was counseled to read the New Testament and pray, and before long Sundar Singh had the joy of hearing his father confess Christ. It was quite natural for the father to wish to be baptized by his son, but this he refused to do, as he had consistently maintained that he was not sent to baptize but to preach the Gospel. To me, the conversion of the father, who had driven his son from home and had at least consented to his poisoning, because of his conversion to Christianity, is convincing testimony to the sincerity of the son's Christian life and claims.

"The Apostle of the West"

The conversion of his father brings the Sadhu's career down to 1920, when a new chapter opens in his life. It had long been his desire to visit Palestine and to travel through European lands. He had especially longed to see the land where his Savior had lived in the days of His flesh. With this desire he had also had the wish to visit Europe and America to see Christian civilization for himself. His Hindu opponents had often cast

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the reproach in his face that the religion of his adoption, which he was preaching to his countrymen, had failed in the Western lands and that Christian civilization was bankrupt. Their attacks had only whetted his desire to bear witness for Christ in the Christian lands of the West. His father, now a Christian, heartily co-operated in these plans, and, being a wealthy man according to Indian standards, furnished the money for the voyage to England. He left the shores of his native land in January, 1920, in a ship sailing from Bombay, and a month later set foot on English soil. On landing, he immediately made a tour of the principal cities of the British Isles, attracting crowds wherever he spoke. In Oxford he was welcomed to many of the colleges, and in London he preached in Anglican churches, in Westminster Chapel, and in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. On one occasion, at Westminster, he addressed seven hundred Anglican clergymen, including the Archbishop of Canterbury. He also preached in the leading Presbyterian churches of Edinburgh and Glasgow. After a sojourn of three months in England, he crossed the Atlantic and spoke in the chief cities of the North and West and visited some of the summer Conferences. He was especially anxious to counteract the influence of the Hindu and Buddhist preachers who had been winning a few converts in America. From San Francisco he sailed on July 30th, for Australia, visiting Honolulu on his way. He received a very warm welcome in Australia, preaching the Gospel in the chief cities of that Dominion. He was back in his native land by the last of September, 1920, where he took up his work as an itinerant preacher once more, and the following year journeyed to his favorite field, Thibet.

His second journey was undertaken in 1922 in response to many invitations to visit Europe. In accepting the invitations from Europe, he determined to carry out a long deferred plan to visit Palestine. His father once more furnished him the money for his journey, and

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he sailed again for the West, on January 29, 1922. He broke his journey at the Suez Canal in order to see Egypt and Palestine. The latter land, as the home of the Savior in the days of His flesh, attracted him like a magnet. With the enthusiasm of a true pilgrim, he visited all the sites in the Holy Land which are associated with the important events in the life of Jesus. His spontaneous comment that the Holy Land is "the best practical commentary on the Gospels" is to be compared with Renan's famous dictum, "Palestine, the Fifth Gospel".

From Palestine he went to Egypt, where he preached to Coptic Christians in Cairo. His second landing in Europe was at Marseilles, from which port he proceeded to Switzerland and Germany. In Geneva he preached in the famous Reformation Hall, in which the League of Nations was holding its sessions. In this famous hall, with all its historic associations, he remarked: "The League of Nations has made great efforts, but it cannot accomplish anything as long as there is no 'league of hearts', and this league is only possible when the hearts of men are devoted to Him who is the Master of their hearts; in Him alone we may find genuine peace". After visiting other Swiss cities, he went to Germany, addressing University audiences. He was especially impressed by his stay in Wittenberg, the cradle of the German Reformation. In this connection we might note that Professor Heiler, a High Church Lutheran, calls attention to the similarity between his simple piety and that of Martin Luther.

Leaving Germany he traveled further north to the Scandinavian lands and received a royal welcome in Sweden, being the guest of Prince Oscar. In referring to his association with European princes, he uttered these significant words, "but I live ever with the Prince of Peace". While in Sweden he was also a guest of the distinguished churchman, Archbishop Söderblom. In the hall of the University at Upsala he discoursed con-

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cerning Hinduism and in the cathedral he preached on prayer, the Archbishop being his interpreter. After visiting the other Scandinavian lands, he journeyed to Holland, where he met the leading statesmen, professors, and ecclesiastical leaders. He had invitations to almost every country of Europe, as well as from America and New Zealand, but, wearied with his many addresses and by the social attentions which he received, he confined himself to a few sermons at the Keswick Conference in England. The second journey in Europe had been a triumphal procession, but he yearned for the rest and quiet of the Himalayas, where through meditation and prayer he might acquire new strength for his apostolic calling.

Sadhu Sundar Singh made a profound impression on the educated classes in Europe. Several Indians, notably Tagore, had lectured in the leading intellectual centers as exponents of the wisdom of India and on the high ideals of her ancient philosophy. Their thesis had been that the ancient wisdom of India had a real contribution to make to the civilization of Europe. Some of these Indian visitors had even gone so far as to present the Indian caste system as an ideal social organization. It was something new and startling to have an Indian discard all this as worthless and to publicly announce that the salvation of India, as well as of Europe and America, depended on the acceptance of Jesus, the living Savior, and His teachings as the true philosophy of life. The impression which this message made was profound. When the Sadhu had finished his sermon in St. Bride's Church, London, nearly everyone in the congregation was on his knees praying. "The Church Times" made the striking comment: "All felt as if a man from another world had spoken". A Dutch theologian confessed in a letter: "He was a revelation to me, and the world of the New Testament was brought nearer to me through his appearance and made more intelligible". A professor of an English University, an agnos-

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tic, gave his personal testimony to the Sadhu: "Your preaching has not converted me, but you yourself—you, a Hindu, so like Christ in spirit and attitude. You are a living witness of the Gospel of the Person of Jesus Christ".

There is a pathetic side to Sundar Singh's visit to western lands. He discovered that to a very large extent his Hindu opponents in India were correct. The civilizations of these lands were not Christian, and the lives of most of the people of the Occident were as pagan as those of the inhabitants of India or China. Yet he showed his fair-mindedness and the sanity of his judgment in recognizing that in spite of the defects of occidental civilization, there were many true Christians in the West who were trying to follow their Master in sincerity and in truth. The Indian Saint has left on record a beautiful parable showing that Christ and Christianity are not to blame for the superficial religion and nominal Christianity of western lands.

"One day in the Himalayas I sat on the bank of a stream. I drew out of the water a beautiful round hard stone and broke it. Its center was entirely dry. This stone had lain in the water a long time but the water had not penetrated the stone. It is exactly thus with men here in Europe. For centuries long they have been bathed by Christianity, they have been entirely immersed in its blessings, they live in Christendom, but Christianity has not penetrated them and does not live in them. Christianity is not to blame, but the hardness of their hearts. Materialism and intellectualism have made their hearts hard, so I am not at all astonished that many people in this land cannot understand what Christ is."

Besides disillusionment, there was a subtle and grave danger to the spiritual life of this simple-hearted Indian Christian in the attention which he received in Western lands. The adulation which he received everywhere from men of distinction and women of high social standing would have been enough to turn the head of any ordinary mortal. That under such circumstances this man kept his balance, is irrefutable evidence of the sincerity and genuineness of his Christian faith. However, it is to be noted that his second visit to Europe

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profoundly affected his outlook on Christianity and it changed the tone of his preaching into denunciations of the prophetic type, with a distinctly eschatological and apocalyptic coloring. Disillusioned and disappointed, he left Europe, addressing his hearers: "It is the first and last time that you see me here". He returned to the shores of his native land to take up with zeal his dangerous and laborious calling as "the Apostle of Thibet".

In April, 1929, the heroic Indian preacher entered the inhospitable land of Thibet, for what is probably the last time, as nothing has been heard of him since. His friends have been able to follow his trail to the boundary line in the Western Himalayas, so that they are sure he actually entered his favorite field of labor. With good reason they fear that the world-renowned Christian Sadhu has either succumbed to the elements or disease, or has won the martyr's crown in the land of the Lamas.

His Prayer Life

With this brief sketch of the unique and fascinating life story of one of the outstanding Christian leaders of our age, let us pass to his personal religious life and to his chief theological conceptions. Sadhu Sundar Singh has been characterized as one of the heroes of the prayer life. Professor Heiler, both in his biography of the Sadhu, and in his monumental work on prayer, classes the Indian saint in his prayer life with St. Augustine, St. Francis, and Luther. His intimate communion with God in prayer is the source of his unique and rich Christian experience, and of his self-sacrificing life as an itinerant preacher, as well as the means whereby he made miraculous escapes from the hands of his enemies. A saying frequently on his lips runs, "Through man's prayer God can accomplish great things". It is his practice to rise early in the morning and to begin the day by reading a passage of Scripture

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on which he meditates, and then passes into prayer which may last for two or three hours. During his wanderings in the Himalayas, in imitation of his Master, he has often devoted entire days and nights to prayer. Occidental Christians with whom he came in contact were amazed at his emphasis on prayer as a source of spiritual life, for he always maintained that it was an essential element of a vital Christian life. One of his beautiful parables setting forth the necessity and power of prayer will give us a better conception of his position than pages of exposition.

"Once I was sitting on the bank of a river and observed some fish coming up to the surface and opening their mouths. I thought that they wanted to eat the smaller fish. But an expert in these matters afterward told me that they had come up to the surface occasionally for air even though they could breathe to a certain extent under water. Like these fish, Christians also have to rise from time to time above their daily occupations in order that they may come into closer contact with God, though even while occupied in their work they can keep to some extent in touch with Him."

For him prayer is not only the door to spiritual reality, but also the medium through which the soul of man gets a vision of God—not the God of speculative theology, but God as revealed in Christ Jesus. In prayer the deepest mysteries of Christianity, like the incarnation, the resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, will be revealed to the praying heart. Prayer is the key which unlocked for him the mystery of the deity of Christ. "We learn", says Sundar Singh, "much concerning Jesus in the books of the Bible, but we can know Him only through prayer. This is my own experience. I did not understand that He was in reality God before He revealed Himself in prayer. Then I apprehended that He was the eternal Word".

His philosophy of prayer is worthy of study in an age when so many American Christians are skeptical concerning its necessity and power. According to his view, prayer is not made up of mere childish petitions for petty earthly blessings or for deliverance from the difficult situations of life, a theory of prayer which is

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held by the average Christian, and according to which he tests its efficacy. On the other hand, he does not share the view of the Brahman or the Buddhist for whom the essence of prayer is artificial petitionless meditation. For Sundar Singh prayer is conversation with God, communion and fellowship with Him; in a word, it is the possession of God Himself, Who is the author and giver of every gift. Let us have one of his own illustrations. "How much of your prayer is petition and how much of it is communion?" a European scholar asked the Sadhu.

"For the first two or three years after my conversion", he replied, "I used to ask for specific things. Now I ask for God. Supposing there is a tree full of fruits, you will have to go and buy or beg the fruits from the owner of the tree. Every day you would have to go for one or two fruits. But if you can make the tree your own property, then all the fruits will be your own. In the same way, if God is your own, then all things in heaven and on earth will be your own, because He is your Father and is everything to you, otherwise you will have to go and ask like a beggar for certain things. When they are used up, you will have to ask again. So ask not for gifts, but for the Giver of gifts; not for life but for the Giver of life—then life and the things needed for life will be added unto you".

The intercessory element is a prominent feature in his prayers. "I have two or three hundred god-children. I have a list of their names. When I am on my preaching tours I do not find the time to pray for them, but when on the Himalayas I pray for them". With reference to certain superficial difficulties so often raised about the value of prayer, he has made observations which ought to be seriously weighed. "By prayer we cannot change God's plans. But the man who prays is changed". Or again, "We cannot change God's plans but in prayer we can understand His plans in relation to ourselves". Nearly all the Sadhu's prayer thoughts and expressions may be found in the writings of the great Christians of the past like St. Augustine, St. Francis, and Thomas á Kempis. Through his prayers there rings an echo of Augustine's cry, "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our heart is restless till it rests

in Thee". And there is a touch of the childlike faith of Martin Luther. But, notwithstanding these similarities, Professor Heiler emphatically asserts that the characteristic thoughts and expressions in the prayers of the Indian saint are a "radiation of his personal experience, therefore, his expressions in prayer, as his words concerning prayer, shine like newly minted gold pieces". Professeor Heiler, in his monumental work on prayer, already referred to, assigns him not only a place among the great men of prayer, but a special place, because of the central position which he assigns to prayer, in both the devotional life and the intellectual life of a Christian. For many a Christian, both in the Orient and in the Occident, he has unlocked the gate to the world of prayer.

The chief products of his intimate communion with God in prayer are ecstasy and ineffable peace and joy. The Sadhu regards the state of ecstasy, into which he often passes while he is praying, as a special gift of God, and in these states he claims to receive the revelations of God's will concerning his work. He has always been reluctant to speak of his ecstatic experiences, even to his near friends, and has always refused to discuss them in his public addresses. The present writer is inclined to agree with Professor Heiler that it was unfortunate for Canon Streeter to publish what the Sadhu had told him concerning these states, for they belong to the holy of holies of his Christian experience, and it is difficult for a prosaic Christian of the West to have a sympathetic understanding or appreciation of them. The Apostle Paul had such experiences and alludes to them in Second Corinthians with great reserve, informing the Christian Church that he was caught up to the third heaven and heard unutterable words. The content of the ecstasy in the Sadhu's experience is a direct vision of the other world. "No word is spoken but I see everything in pictures. Problems are solved in a moment easily and without labor". These states come upon

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him unexpectedly, without warning, a characteristic which differentiates them from the trance states artificially induced by Hindu sadhus. Sundar Singh regards this condition of ecstasy as the special gift of God, and shows his sanity in his position that the Christian ordinarily finds normal fellowship with God in prayer. His sensible view of ecstasies and his freedom from a supercilious attitude toward others, differentiates him from a crank.

With the condition of ecstasy goes the ineffable peace which he experiences. This holy peace and joy are not confined to his hours of ecstasy but are a constant experience of his life. Peace (Sanskrit *santi*) was the goal which he had in mind in his pre-Christian days. This word *santi* constitutes the rhythm of many a verse of the Vedic writings, and the state of *santi* was sought by him in his youth with deep yearning and great diligence. He has confessed, "In Christ I have found what Hinduism and Buddhism could not give me, peace and joy upon this earth". Bishop Söderblom, whose guest he was in Sweden, says, "He radiates peace and joy"; and another, who associated with him in his European journey, characterized him as "an incarnation of peace and gentleness". Mrs. Parker, a missionary to India, and his earliest biographer, regards this peace as the outstanding trait of his character, adding "no portrait can reproduce the beauty of his smile". A remarkable thing about this peace is that he experiences it not only in the days when his life runs quietly and smoothly but also in suffering and persecution. He confesses that he found heavenly peace on the first night after his expulsion from home, and in his sufferings and persecutions in Thibet, even when he was cast into the dry pit at Rasar. This heavenly peace is for Sundar Singh the central miracle of his life, and not only of his own life but the central miracle of Christianity. The proof of the truth of the Gospel is the satisfaction of the deepest yearning which God has implanted in the human heart.

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There are few among the great Christian saints who have had as deep an experience of the peace of God that passeth understanding. Here again Sundar Singh's life experience is a confirmation of Augustine's confession, "our heart is restless till it rests in Thee".

According to Sundar Singh's philosophy, the Cross of Christ is the source of his peace and joy. He asserts that his experience of this blessing is deepest and more overwhelming in times of severest physical suffering. He maintains that he has experienced the presence of Christ in his sufferings so clearly that no doubt could arise in his mind. In his writings and sermons one can find many illustrations and parables setting forth the philosophy of suffering and the Cross. He says, for example, "Through the Cross God reveals His life to man; without the Cross he would know nothing of the heavenly Father". He takes diamonds as another illustration. "They must be cut and polished before they sparkle, then they reflect the sun's rays in wonderful colors. In the same way we will shine as jewels in God's kingdom when we are transformed by the Cross". Like the Apostle Paul, he considers it a great privilege to have fellowship with Christ in suffering. Like all the great Christian martyrs and mystics, he is a lover of the Cross, as one of his many sayings set forth: "Also the angels in heaven demand to bear the Cross, but this privilege is exclusively reserved for men. Oh, this wonderful privilege"! In the words of "The Imitation of Christ", Sundar Singh expresses his personal experience: "*Si libenter portas crucem, portabit te et ducet te ad desideratum finem*".

The Sadhu describes his spiritual experience as "heaven on earth". His "heaven on earth" includes the experience of Christ's presence in prayer, the peace of soul, and the sharing of Christ's Cross upon the earth. He refers to his entire life since his conversion as "life in heaven". In his Swiss addresses he frequently asserted, "This is my testimony—during the last sixteen

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years I have lived in heaven". Especially in his persecution in prison, he maintained that Christ's presence had made the prison into heaven. To him Christianity is not a religion promising a future heaven, but a religion of the possession of heaven here and now. In the background of Sundar Singh's thoughts stands the saying of Christ recorded by the Apostle John, "He that believeth on Me hath eternal life".

If we were to stop now in the description of the religious life of this Indian Christian we would leave an incomplete and distorted portrait, for this "life in heaven" does not consist only in prayer and mystic visions but also in strenuous activities. Peace of heart is his inspiration to a life of unremitting toil for his fellow-men. This man, who spends hours and days in prayer and meditation, enjoying visions of Christ, is like his Master, who left the Mount of Transfiguration to heal the sorely afflicted child. In toilsome and dangerous journeys, suffering hardships, threatened with a martyr's death, he has wandered on foot through India from north to south and through hostile Thibet in order to bear witness for Christ. One of his sayings, "God has not created us to live in caves but to associate with men and to help them", indicates the sanity of his point of view. With unusual clearness and power Sundar Singh has emphasized one of the great principles of primitive Christianity, namely, the experience of God's grace as the source of our love for our brother men, for in Christ faith working through love availeth (Gal. 5:6). He shares with Luther the penetrating insight into this secret of the Gospel.

Another supreme motive in the Sadhu's life is the bearing of witness before men of God's wonderful dealings with him. In his view it is the Christian's duty to bear witness for Christ, even to deaf ears and hard hearts, and even though it brings prison, torture, and death. In fact, he has the same conception of martyrdom as the early Christians. To him, as to them, the

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highest and most holy way in which a Christian can bear witness is to suffer martyrdom. In visiting some of the picture galleries of Europe he was especially impressed by the pictures of the martyrs, such as those of St. Sebastian with his body full of arrows. One of the attractions that Thibet has held for him is the possibility of bearing witness, as a martyr, for his Lord.

In this connection he again shows the sanity of his Christian faith in his characterization of the quiet but real martyrdom many Christians undergo in their daily witness to Christ in the ordinary walks of life. He puts suggestive words into the mouth of Jesus.

"For some believers it is easy to die the martyr's death for My Name's sake. But I also need living martyrs who will daily offer themselves as living sacrifices for the salvation of others. For it is light to die for Me but hard to live for Me; for he who lives for Me must die not once but daily."

His attitude toward the world and life in the world is wholesome. The genuine Christian life has two sides to it, one of communion with God and one of active service for one's fellowmen. So Christ's followers must live and work in the world and yet not be of the world. He has given us three formulas for the position the Christian is to take in the world. "In the world, not of the world". "Within the world, not the world in us". "In the world, but Christ must be in us". One of his most beautiful parables illumines this thought.

"The fish of the sea live in salt water, yet when we taste boiled fish their water does not taste of salt. They have lived in salt water but they have not taken up the salt into themselves. In like manner the true Christian lives in the world but he does not take the world into his heart."

Some Religious Conceptions

The study of the religious conceptions of Sundar Singh is both interesting and fruitful. While it is true that his views on the great doctrines of Christianity are almost identical with those common to the Church Universal, and handed down by tradition, it would be mis-

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leading to regard this as an adequate statement of fact. At many points he is influenced in his exposition of his doctrine by his spiritual and intellectual inheritance from the religion of his forefathers and of his youth. It is a striking fact that he is an uncompromising enemy of all intellectualism, and his protest against metaphysics is as strong as that of the Ritschlian school of theology, although for another reason. In his case it is a reaction against the barren intellectualism of Hinduism, which expresses itself in the doctrine of salvation by knowledge (*jnana*), a keyword of the Hindu religious philosophy of the Vedanta school. The influence of the faith of his fathers also appears in his conception of the punishment of sin, his idea being a reflection of the Hindu doctrine of *karma*. In his manner of thought, he is distinctly Oriental and Indian, for he thinks, not in abstract propositions, but in pictures, and almost uniformly expresses his religious ideas in parables. With him "the parable supplants logic", as Professor Heiler puts it. In his use of parables he is a true follower of the Old Testament prophets, the great religious leaders of his own land, and, above all, of his Lord and Master.

If we were to attempt a classification of this Indian saint, we would place him in a group with St. Francis of Assisi and Luther as over against reflective saints, such as St. Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. In his study of the man, Professor Heiler constantly brings out resemblances between him and Luther in experience, in thought, and expression. Sundar Singh's theology has only one dominating principle, and it is his personal experience of salvation. His motto might be put down as "I have experienced" (*Expertus sum*), and his advice to inquirers invariably is "experience" (*Experire*). One of his parables establishes the fundamental position of this principle in his religious thought.

"This world is full of sorrow; our body is the abode of misery. This being so, many argue that so long as we are in this world possessed of this body heavenly joy is impossible. Once on the

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Himalayas I said to another traveler, 'Here are some hot springs'. He thought I was mad and said, 'It is a lie to say that in this cold place where even water freezes there are hot springs'. I took hold of him and led him and made him dip his hand in a certain spring. Then by means of personal experience he realized the truth of what I had said. Then he tried to offer a scientific reason for the fact. In the same way, only by personal experience can we know that even in this world full of sorrow we can have a heavenly joy."

Such in brief is the background of the Sadhu's theological thinking. Keeping it in mind we shall be able to appreciate his emphases.

In the space at our disposal it is not possible to do more than touch a few of the most important articles of Christian faith. We begin with God as the determining idea of Christian theology. Mystic as he is, he naturally emphasizes the ineffability of God. Returning to ordinary consciousness from one of his ecstasies, he maintains that human speech is incapable of describing the glories which he has beheld. His own metaphor is that of a dumb man who can taste and enjoy sweetness but who is unable to describe his enjoyment. This God, beyond the power of human tongue to describe, is, according to Sundar Singh, "the ocean of love", a distinctly Indian expression. "We say in India 'God is an entire ocean of love'. In this ocean we should live, but sin takes us away. Yet, thanks be to God, Christ can rend the net of sin and lead us back again into the ocean of God's love".

Unlike the God of the Neo-Platonic or the Vedantic mysticism, the Christian God is the one who loves and redeems. Love dominates the relation between God and man, and is not one-sided. Man's natural desire is to have God, and it is God's will to have man. Like many non-Christian and Christian mystics, Sundar Singh sets forth the special relation between God and man under the figure of motherhood, and speaks of God as our spiritual mother.

The idea of God as love so dominates Sundar Singh's conception of deity that the idea of wrath, judg-

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ment, and vengeance recedes so far into the background as to be almost wanting. The Biblical writers in their presentation of God always maintain a proper balance between love and wrath, a balance often termed the polarity of love and wrath. It is finely expressed by the Psalmist (89:15):

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne.
Loving kindness and truth go before thy face."

The prophets, Jesus, and Paul all maintain the polarity. Even in the Gospel of John, the Gospel of love, the wrath of God is to be reckoned with. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (3:36). In some of his addresses Sundar Singh recognizes the judgment of God as a manifestation of His wrath on account of sin, but his own experience of God is so overwhelming that he is led to make the assertion, "God's love is to be found even in hell". He elucidates this assertion by stating that it is not God but sin that punishes a sinner, basing his view not only on his own experience but on Scripture. His proof texts are John 12:47; 3:17 ff.

The Sadhu's teaching concerning suffering, sin, and judgment are very original and would seem strange to an Occidental theologian if he were entirely unacquainted with Indian thought. Sundar Singh maintains that God does not punish sin, for "God is the ocean of love". Nevertheless the sinner is punished, but through an inner necessity in sin itself. There is a suggestion of the idea that sin punishes itself in some of the Apostle Paul's metaphors, like "The wages of sin is death". The Indian saint's view is best presented by giving one of his own illustrations. He takes the case of Judas and expounds it as follows:

"As men have chosen sin, they must die in sin. God does not bring about this death. God sends no one to hell. The sinner himself brings this punishment down on himself. Let us look at the case of Judas Iscariot. When he betrayed the Lord, Pilate

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did not hang him, nor did the High Priest, nor did our loving Savior, nor did the Apostles. He hanged himself. He committed suicide. He died in his sin. This is the end of him who lives in sin."

There is an unmistakable connection between this idea of the punishment of sin and the Indian doctrine of *karma*. It will be well for us to state briefly what the doctrine of *karma* is, and in defining it we must not forget that in Indian thought it is linked up with the idea of transmigration. *Karma* literally means "work", and according to the doctrine of *karma* man's condition in the present world is the resultant of deeds done in a previous stage of existence. If he is a member of a high caste or enjoying great prosperity, it is due to good deeds done in an antecedent state; on the other hand, if one is a member of a low caste or, like Job, is overwhelmed with misfortunes, it is due to evil deeds in a previous state of existence. What the man does in this life will determine the next state of existence and his status therein. It is a terrible form of fatalism from which there is no escape, for there is no forgiveness and all suffering is necessarily penal. It is not difficult to see how the Sadhu's faith and thought have reacted to these two characteristic doctrines of Hinduism. He has rejected transmigration absolutely and there has remained in his mind, probably unconsciously, one element of the doctrine of *karma*, that sinful deeds work out their own dire consequences. Shorn of the other elements of Hindu doctrine, it is not entirely contrary to traditional Christian teaching, for the text "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he reap", has been expounded in countless sermons; but the Indian preacher is on traditional Christian ground when he ascribes the forgiveness of sin to the love of God revealed in the historic Christ. But to enjoy the full benefits of this love, a man must repent of his sins.

As suffering, from time immemorial, and the world over, has been considered a consequence of sin, it is not surprising to discover that in Indian thought suffering

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is always regarded as penal. In protest against this view, commonly current in India, the Sadhu has set forth Christ's teaching appropriately and beautifully in one of his original parables, to which may be given the title, "The Loving Slap".

"God is love, and therefore He will not punish. I do not agree with those who say that sickness and misfortune are punishments. They are what I should call 'the loving slap'. A doctor was telling me of an experience he had. Before a child is born it cannot breathe, but as soon as it is born it breathes. But it is necessary for the child to cry. If the child does not cry, his lungs are contracted and he dies. One child was unable to breathe when he was born and within a few minutes would have died. So the nurse gave him a slap. The mother must have thought: 'She came to help me, but she is killing my son. It was only a few minutes since he was born and now she is giving him a slap.' Through that slap she made the child cry. When the child began to cry he began to breathe. Just so God sometimes gives us a loving slap."

The Sadhu's theology is Christo-centric, and is based upon Christ's personal appearance to him at the hour of his conversion. For this Indian Christian the Incarnation is not a matter of theological speculation, but an empirical fact. In his pre-Christian days he had been an earnest seeker after God and the peace which He alone could bestow, but his search had been in vain. God had remained the indefinable, and the unknowable deity as He is presented by Hindu schools of philosophy. This quest came to an unexpected but blessed conclusion in that early morning hour, when the Lord appeared to him clothed with supernal light and spoke to him. The Sadhu holds that God, Himself, will remain invisible and ineffable to man, even in heaven, and the redeemed will see Him in the Incarnate Christ. In one of his ecstasies the Sadhu learned this truth.

"The first time I entered Heaven I looked around about and I asked, 'But where is God?' And they told me. 'God is not to be seen here any more than on earth, for God is Infinite. But there is Christ, He is God, He is the Image of the Invisible God, and it is only in Him that we can see God, in Heaven as on earth'. And streaming out from Christ I saw, as it were, waves shining and peace-giving, and going through and among the Saints and Angels, and everywhere bringing refreshment, just as in hot weather water refreshes trees. And this I understood to be the Holy Spirit."

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In this extract we have his doctrine of God, of the Person of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.

The incarnation of the Jesus of history is the bridge by which a man can reach God and experience His love and mercy. The metaphor of a bridge was amplified in an address given to the students of Balliol College, Oxford. We repeat his own words in this address.

"When I was in the Himalayas once I wanted to cross the River Sutlej, but there was no bridge. I could not swim over. I was thinking of what I should do when I saw a man and I said to him: 'I would like to go to the other side of the river but there is no bridge or boat'. He said, 'That is all right, air will take you over'. I was surprised. I could breathe air, but air could not take me up and bear me to the other side. But he took a skin and filled it with air, and then asked me to support myself on it. I did so and got safely across. As the air could only carry me by being confined in the skin, so God to help man had to become incarnate. The Word of Life was made flesh. He will carry those who want to cross the river of this world to heaven. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'. We can see the living Father in that Incarnation of Jesus Christ."

Another one of his homely and beautiful parables sets forth his view of the Incarnation and the work of Christ better than any possible exposition.

"On another occasion, I remember, in Kashmir, there was a man who owned several hundred sheep. His servants used to take these sheep out for feeding, and each evening as they brought them back they found two or three missing. He asked his servants to go and look for them, but for fear of wild beasts they did not trouble themselves about them. The owner had a love of them and wanted to save them. 'If I go myself searching for these sheep they will not recognize me, as they have not seen me before. They would recognize my servants but the servants will not go. So I must become like a sheep'. He took a sheep's skin and put it on himself and looked like a sheep. He went out and found some that had gone astray and some that had been wounded. They readily followed him, thinking that he was a sheep like one of themselves. He brought them in and sat with them and fed them. When he had saved all the sheep and brought them home, he took off the sheep skin. He was not sheep but man. He became a sheep in order to save those lost sheep. So God is not man, He became man in order to save men."

This brief and inadequate presentation of the religious ideas of the Sadhu must suffice. Partial though it is, the sketch will clearly indicate what manner of man and of Christian he is.

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The Significance of Sundar Singh

In the opinion of many thoughtful missionaries a new epoch in the history of Christianity in India has opened with the career of Sundar Singh. The religion of Jesus Christ has been made indigenous to this Asiatic land by this young man who has lived and preached the Gospel of Christ in distinctively Indian dress and according to traditional Indian methods. In a real sense he has baptized the Indian institution of the itinerant religious teacher as well as the Indian form of thought into Christianity without emasculating the teachings of the New Testament. Undoubtedly these characteristics reënforced by his magnetic personality and his unique Christian experience have made a strong appeal to the peoples of India. Dr. Fife expressed himself emphatically in a letter to Professor Heiler: "On Christians and non-Christians he exercises an influence never greater than at present. There is a large number of genuine Christian men in North India and Sundar Singh holds an unique position; there is only one Sundar Singh".* But the influence of his personality and teaching are not confined to India or neighboring lands. He has borne testimony for Christ in Europe, America, and Australia. In his two visits to the Occident he met some of the leading theologians and preachers, arousing in them both interest and admiration, and impressing upon them the reality and genuineness of his Christian faith. Three of the outstanding theologians of the world have been fascinated by him and have studied his personality and teachings with enthusiasm and thoroughness. We repeat their names: Bishop Söderblom of Upsala, Professor Heiler of Marburg, and Canon Streeter of Oxford. Estimating his significance for the West, Professor Heiler writes: "His personality and preaching is the sharpest criticism imaginable of the degeneration and superficiality of the present day

*This letter was dated March 9, 1925.

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Christianity; yes, it is more than that, it is a new powerful suggestion of what is central and necessary to Christianity, a loud appeal to the conscience of Christendom to be in earnest with the truth of Christian faith”.

Going into particulars, the German theologian maintains that Western Christianity at the present time is poor in men who are living in communion with Christ, in prayer, and meditation on Scripture. The Western Church is rich in learned theologians, able administrators, and eloquent preachers, but, as Sundar Singh puts it, “Present day Christianity has lost a sixth sense, ‘the inner spiritual sense’ which permits us to perceive the presence of God in our life just as the five bodily senses permit us to perceive the outer things of this world”. With the loss of this faculty, the ability to pray in his sense has disappeared. In his American and European journeys Sundar Singh correctly diagnosed the situation of Western Christianity and attributed its weakness to the lack of prayer. In Switzerland he said to a pastor: “You Europeans make altogether too much haste; you have no time to pray and to live”. To another, who asked him how he might attain greater success, he replied briefly, “More prayer”. Two of his striking *obiter dicta* are apposite in this connection.

“A Christian without prayer is a corpse.” “Men who do not live in communion with God in prayer are not worthy to be called men. They are trained animals.”

Such teaching is based upon the Gospels and is a summons to the Church of America to return to the childlike faith of the Apostolic Christianity.

This brief sketch of the career and teachings of the Indian Christian is all that our space permits. It is hoped that the very inadequacy of the essay will induce the reader to study the biographies of Sundar Singh by Canon Streeter and Professor Heiler, both of which he will find to be rich sources of inspiration. The thoughtful American Christian will recognize that in Sadhu

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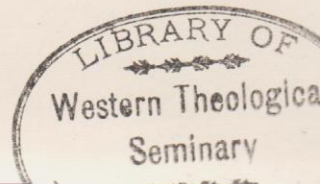
Sundar Singh we have a character that might have stepped out of the pages of the New Testament, a veritable companion of Barnabas and Paul on their missionary journeys. His faith, his mode of work and his manner of teaching will not only give a note of reality to the New Testament Scriptures, but act as a vigorous tonic to his faith. The message of this unique disciple of the Lord to the Church of America is a clarion summons to awake from the slumber of self-complacency and to realize that the small but vigorous churches of Asia and Africa have become not only the growing point but the teaching point of the Church Universal.

Bibliography

Anyone interested in pursuing the study of Sadhu Sundar Singh further, will find the following works both instructive and inspiring.

1. B. H. Streeter and A. J. Appasamy, *The Sadhu, A Study in Mysticism and Practical Religion*, Macmillan and Company. 1921.
2. Friedrich Heiler, *The Gospel of Sadhu Sundar Singh*. Abridged translation by Olive Wyon. London: Allen and Unwin. 1927.
3. Sadhu Sundar Singh, *Reality and Religion*, Macmillan and Company. 1925.
4. Sadhu Sundar Singh, *Meditations on Various Aspects of the Spiritual Life*, Macmillan and Company. 1926.
5. Sadhu Sundar Singh, *Visions of the Spiritual World*, Macmillan and Company. 1927. A brief description of the Spiritual Life, its Different States of Existence, and the Destiny of Good and Evil Men as seen in Visions.

The two books first mentioned contain a large biographical element. Professor Heiler gives a more systematic exposition of his teachings than Canon Streeter.



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and really supplements the treatment of the English scholar. The last three works of this list are booklets, containing the Sadhu's own sayings concerning various aspects of religious truth.

All the books mentioned in this bibliography are on the shelves of the Seminary Library.